

Message Text

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PAGE 01 COLOMB 01738 101212Z

46

ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 SS-15 NSC-10 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-10

NSAE-00 PA-03 RSC-01 USIA-12 PRS-01 AID-20 OMB-01

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R 101140Z JUL 73

FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9737

C O N F I D E N T I A L COLOMBO 1738

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, CE

SUBJ: UNP WINS DEDIGAMA BY-ELECTION

REF COLOMBO 1706

1. UNP CANDIDATE RUKMAN SENANAYAKE WON 9 JULY DEDIGAMA BY-ELECTION, POLLING 4500 VOTE MAJORITY. UNP MARGIN IN DEDIGAMA IS LARGEST SINCE MID-50'S AND SUBSTANTIALLY GREATER THAN THREE BY-ELECTIONS IT WON IN OCT 72. BOTH INDEPENDENT CANDIDATES GOT SO FEW VOTES AS TO LOSE THEIR DEPOSITS.

2. COMMENT: UNP VICTORY IS IMPRESSIVE AND APPEARS TO CONFIRM FEARS OF UFG LEADERSHIP ABOUT LOSS OF POPULAR SUPPORT FOR COALITION. OPPOSITION LEADER J.R. JAYEWARDENE MADE COST OF LIVING HIS MAIN ISSUE, AND GENERAL PUBLIC IS LIKELY TO INTERPRET DEDIGAMA OUTCOME AS DECISIVE PROTEST AGAINST UFG'S FAILURE TO END SHORTAGES AND OTHER ECONOMIC HARDSHIPS. STRONG SLFP EFFORT IN LAST FEW DAYS OF CAMPAIGNING TO PROMOTE ESTATE TAKE-OVERS UNDER LAND REFORM AS ANSWER TO PEASANTS PROBLEMS APPEARS TO HAVE HAD LITTLE IMPACT. UNP'S CAMPAIGN DEMAND THAT 71 INSURGENCY SUSPECTS BE RELEASED FROM DETENTION AND J.R.'S FREQUENT TRIBUTE TO MEMORY OF LOCAL CASUALTIES MAY ACCOUNT FOR COMPLETE SWAMPING OF FAR-LEFT INDEPENDENT WHO REPORTEDLY WAS COUNTING ON YOUTH VOTE BECAUSE OF HIS TIES TO INSURGENCY. IN POST-ELECTION STATEMENT RUKMAN SENANAYAKE DESCRIBED HIS

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PAGE 02 COLOMB 01738 101212Z

SUCCESS AS "VICTORY OF YOUTH" IN OVERCOMING SLFP OBSTACLES

IN CAMPAIGN.

3. COUNTRY FACES PROSPECT OF YET ANOTHER BY-ELECTION IN
NEAR FUTURE: PRESS REPORTS DEATH JULY 10 OF V.A. SUGATHADASA,
UNP M.P. FOR COLOMBO NORTH AND FORMER MINISTER IN DUDLEY
SENANAYAKE CABINET.
VAN HOLLEN

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NNN

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